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ABSTRACT

Noting that involved parents can improve their children's chances of succeeding in school, this packet of cards offers 100 tips created to help parents become more involved in their child's education. Following a card of general tips on becoming involved, tips are offered in the following topic areas: helping a child stay alcohol, tobacco, and drug free; homework; parents' rights; parent teacher conferences; readiness to read and reading; violence in school; special education; television; testing; and computers. For each topic, suggestions for obtaining additional information and assistance are included. (HTH)

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100 Tips for Parents: Parent Information and Resource Centers.

U. S. Department of Education
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100 TIPS FOR PARENTS

Parent Information and Resource Centers

U.S. Department of Education

You Matter—Get Involved!

These tips have been created to help you become more involved in your child's education. As a more involved parent, you improve your child's chances to be successful in school. For each topic, you will find suggestions for how you can obtain additional information and assistance.

Get Involved—It Matters!

Being involved in your children's education helps them do well in school and improves the quality of your school. Here are some suggestions on how to get started. Find the time to get involved—it makes a difference!

1. Take your child to school on the first day.
2. Let your child know that school is important. Be sure to ask questions about homework, and set up a quiet place for your child to work.
3. Read everything that is sent home from school—report cards, homework assignments, school lunch plans, and vacation and bus schedules. Show your child that you are well informed.
4. Get to know your child's teachers and school principal by attending school meetings and parent-teacher conferences.
5. Ask for copies of school policies (e.g., attendance, discipline). Ask questions if there is something you do not understand.
6. Volunteer to help out with school activities. Attend sports events, help out with fundraisers, or volunteer to work in the school office.
7. Visit your child's classroom when class is in session, not just at parent-teacher conferences. Set this up in advance with the school office and the teacher.
8. Talk to other parents. If there is a parent organization, join it. If there is no parent organization at your school, think about starting one. Finding two or three other interested parents is a good start.
9. Encourage your child to read at home. Visit local libraries or use book mobiles, school libraries, or book fairs and pick out books together. Pick out books for each other to read.
10. Being involved in a child's education is just as important for stepparents, grandparents, and other adults who care for a child.
11. Invite stepparents, grandparents, and other adults who care for your child to participate in school activities.
12. Your actions, not just your words, make an impression that could last a lifetime.

For more information, call 1-800-USA-LEARN (1-800-872-5327).

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Help Your Child Stay Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drug Free

What you say to your child about using alcohol or drugs makes a big difference. Believe it or not, children DO listen to their parents when they talk about these things—and children say that their parents are a huge influence in their decision not to use alcohol or drugs.

1. Talk to your child about the real risks of using alcohol or drugs. If you are having a hard time getting started and need more information, get a copy of *Keeping Youth Drug Free* from the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686 or *www.health.org*.
2. Be a good role model for your child; don't take part in any illegal, unhealthy, or dangerous drug use practices.
3. Make parenting a priority. Make rules for your child and enforce the rules. Children say that they want rules from their parents—it shows them that you care about what happens to them. Adapt the rules as needed as your child gets older and more independent.
4. Help your child learn what to say if offered alcohol or drugs. It's easier to stand up to peer pressure with some practice saying no and being firm about it.
5. Know who your child's friends are and get to know the friends' parents or caregivers, too.
6. Watch for signs of stress in your child and help your child learn how to deal with stress. Teenagers say stress is one of the reasons they start using drugs.
7. Educate yourself. Identify the different types of drugs, their slang names, the signs of use, and short- and long-term consequences.
8. Talk to your child's teacher, school counselor, and the school principal about recommended alcohol, tobacco, and drug programs and materials.

Homework

Homework is a regular part of school, and you can help your child do it well. Teachers give homework for many good reasons—to practice and review class lessons, to get students ready for the next lessons, to teach them how to work on their own, and to teach them to use dictionaries, encyclopedias, libraries, and the Internet.

1. Set up a regular time and a quiet place for your child to work. Try to make it away from TVs, radios, or other loud noises.
2. Have your child get all of the materials needed for the homework—pens, pencils, erasers, calculator, paper, books, and highlighters—all in one spot instead of searching for things.
3. Make a homework calendar. During the school day, have your child fill in all homework by the date that it is due. Many teachers have their classes do this anyway and you can help your child plan assigned homework time.
4. If your child is having trouble with homework, talk to each teacher about the homework—it may be too hard or there may be other problems in the classroom. The school may be able to offer tutoring or extra help.
5. Ask your child for any teacher comments on homework assignments.
6. If your child misses school, have a friend or classmate get homework assignments.
7. Remember, neatness does count. Don't let your child eat or drink while doing homework.
8. Suggest that your child do homework, then take a short break (snack, play outside, or watch some TV), then go back and recheck the work. It's easier to catch simple mistakes with fresh eyes.

Web Resources for Homework Help:
For students: www.homeworkspot.com
For parents: www.ParentSmart.com

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Parents' Rights

There may be times when you need to be an advocate for your child's education—someone who tries to make sure things go well and speaks up when they don't. In order to be a good advocate, you need information. The information listed here can help you.

1. You have the right to examine your child's school records and look at test results and teacher comments. If you see things you don't understand, ask the teacher or school principal for an explanation.
2. If your child is in a special education class, you have the right to be a part of developing an individual educational plan to meet your child's needs. This is established by the Federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
3. You have the right to request in writing that your child not be physically punished for breaking school rules.
4. You have the right to request that your child be excused from school activities that you object to on religious, moral, or other reasonable grounds.
5. If your child is suspended from school, you have the right to ask for a review of the decision.
6. Your child has the right to be protected from unreasonable searches on school grounds.
7. You have the right to challenge school policies that do not allow children to participate in sports activities because of their sex.
8. If your child attends a Title I school, a school that receives Federal funds for low-income children who may need extra help to succeed in school, the law requires that you be involved in decisions about programs and activities that affect your child. Your school principal will know if your school is a Title I school.

For more information, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

What To Ask at a Parent-Teacher Conference

Take advantage of parent-teacher conferences during the school year. Think of some questions and concerns you may have and write them down before your meeting. Keep track of your child's schoolwork to help you with your questions. You are in a position to share important information as well as ask questions. Remember, you can and should talk to your child's teacher throughout the year.

Questions To Ask for Students in All Grades

1. Is my child performing at grade level?
2. What are my child's strengths and weaknesses in major subjects—reading, math, and science?
3. How much time should my child spend on homework?
4. Are my child's assignments completed accurately and on time?
5. Does the school have special programs to meet my child's needs?
6. Does my child have special learning needs? Are there special classes my child should be in?
7. Do you keep a folder of my child's work? If yes, could you review it with me?
8. Does my child have close friends? How well does my child get along with the other students?
9. What can we do at home to support classroom learning?
10. What is the best way to keep in touch with you?

Additional Questions for Middle and High School Students

1. How can I help my child to work independently and make the best use of time?
2. How can I help my child prepare for high school?
3. What can you tell me about peer pressure and how I can help my child handle difficult situations—drugs, alcohol, and sex?
4. What courses should my child take to satisfy graduation requirements?
5. Do you have a list of courses my child should take to be ready to enter college?
6. If my child plans to attend college, how will the school help with the application process?
7. If my child plans to attend college, how will the school help my child find out about financial aid?

For more information, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Readiness To Read and Reading

Many parents help their children learn to read, which helps children have a more successful school experience. For more information, order *Helping Your Child Learn To Read* by the U.S. Department of Education, at 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Infants and Young Children

1. Start young. In just a few months an infant can sit with you, look at pictures, and hear your voice. Point and name familiar objects at home.
2. Vary the tone of your voice, sing nursery rhymes, bounce your knee, and make funny faces. Use other special effects to stimulate your baby's interests.
3. Allow your child to touch and hold sturdy cardboard books.
4. When reading to your baby, be brief but read as often as you can.
5. When reading to your child, follow the words with your finger so that your child learns to follow from left to right.
6. In early reading, the rhyme is a way for children to enjoy the repetition of the sound of language.

Older Children

1. Encourage reading for the fun of it as a free-time activity, and keep books in your home.
2. Talk and listen to your children. Language is like a four-legged stool: speaking, listening, reading, and writing are its parts, and each supports the other.
3. Read with your children every chance you get—even if it's just part of a newspaper article at the breakfast table, and turn off the TV when you do it.
4. Set the example; be sure your children see you reading and understand that you read for enjoyment and to get needed information.
5. Monitor your children's schoolwork and applaud their efforts.

The National Reading Panel produces objective reports about what works and what doesn't in reading. Check online at www.NationalReadingPanel.org, *or call 1-800-USA-LEARN*

Note: Parents for whom English is a second language are encouraged to read to their children in their first language.

Violence in Your School

You've seen or read news reports about student violence in schools. Most schools are safe, but youth violence is on the rise. As a parent or caregiver, there are steps you can take to help keep your child safe at school.

1. Request a copy of the school handbook that contains school rules and regulations.
2. Be sure you understand what the behavior rules are in your child's school, find out what the punishments are for breaking the rules, and review these with your child. For example, what is your school's definition of a weapon and what happens if a child is caught with a weapon in school?*
3. Find out if your child's school keeps track of:
   - Students who skip school or miss classes.
   - Complaints by children of being bullied on school grounds, in bathrooms, or on the way to and from school.
   - Disrespectful behavior toward the teachers.
   - Increasing rates of stealing and vandalism of school property.
   - Small groups of students who always seem to be angry or cut off from other students.
4. Don't worry alone. Talk with other parents. Organize a parent group with the goal of creating a safe school. Talk to your school principal and offer help.
5. Talk to your children regularly. Ask them if they are worried about their safety. They will often have valuable ideas and suggestions.
6. Find out who is supposed to be at your child's school for supervision before and after hours. This is important to know if your child is going to school early or staying there late.
7. Is there a security system at your child's school? How are visitors handled? How are doors to the outside controlled?
8. Talk to your children about being aware of strangers in school or in school hallways.
9. Find out if staff members in other organizations in your community, such as libraries, community centers, places of worship, or recreation centers, are also concerned about violence in schools. What programs do they offer that you could work with them on to improve school safety?
10. Ask other parents worried about safety in schools to contact you, or make an announcement at a community or school board meeting.
11. Talk to your child about how to handle anger and problems with others. Talk with your child's teacher, school counselor, and school principal about ways to make this part of classroom lessons.

** In a recent code of conduct issued by the Norfolk Public Schools, the following were considered weapons: knife, razor, ice pick, explosive, sword, cane, machete, firearm, look-a-like toy gun, mace, pellet or air rifle pistol, or other objects that reasonably can be considered a weapon.*

For more general information and research, call the National Resource Center for Safe Schools at 1-800-268-2275, or look online at www.safetyzone.org

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Special Education

If your child needs extra help with school or is in a special education program, your school system must offer an appropriate education. As a parent or caregiver, you have the right under Federal law to be a part of the planning of any program that is going to be used to meet your child's special needs. The Federal law that gives you this guarantee is called the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

1. If you think your child has a learning disability, you have a right to ask the school for a free evaluation by qualified professionals.
2. During this evaluation, the professional may try to find out how well your child:
   - Speaks and understands language.
   - Adjusts to outside surroundings.
   - Has done in school.
   - Thinks and behaves.
3. An individualized education program (IEP) is a written statement of the educational program designed to meet your child's needs. Have you taken part in an IEP meeting for your child? If you disagree with the placement of your child in a specific class or with specific arrangements made for your child, you can question or appeal those decisions.
4. Depending on the needs of your child, the services in the IEP could be provided:
   - In regular classes.
   - In special classes.
   - At a special school.
   - At home.
   - In a hospital.
5. Your child should take part in as many regular programs and activities as possible.
6. Ask for a meeting at least once a year with your child's teacher and school principal to review your child's progress under the individualized education program and decide what changes you would like to see made for the next IEP.
7. Even if your child is not in school yet, all children have the right to an appropriate education. All babies and children with disabilities or special needs are entitled to planning services.

For more information about an Individualized Education Program, what your rights are, and research on children who have special learning needs, contact the National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities at 1-800-695-0285 or online at www.nichcy.org.

Television

American children watch an average of 3 to 5 hours of TV each day. Although TV can be fun and educational, it's important to know what your children are watching, to make sure it's not too much, and to make sure it doesn't stop them from doing schoolwork.

1. Find out how many hours a day your child watches TV.
2. Monitor what your child is watching and, whenever possible, watch the programs with your child.
3. Pick a TV show to watch as a family. What kind of conversations can you start from the TV show? For instance, ask "Why are those people in the program so unkind to each other?"
4. Plan other activities, such as crafts, reading, doing homework, or writing letters, instead of watching TV. Try to plan at least one different activity each week.
5. Avoid using TV as a babysitter.
6. Look for TV programs that will stimulate your child's interests and encourage reading (dramatizations of children's stories, wildlife adventures, history, and science).
7. Avoid using television as a reward or punishment. It gives TV too much importance.
8. If your child has a TV set in the bedroom, you may not know what is being watched. If possible, keep the TV in a common area, like the living room or den.
9. Turn off the TV during meals and study time. Make a rule that homework and chores must be finished before the TV can be turned on.
10. Help your child understand the difference between make believe and the real world in television programs.
11. Do you need to review your own television watching habits? Remember your child is watching what you watch and how much time you spend doing it.

Interested in learning more about improving your child's education? Go to www.ed.gov, *or call 1-800-USA-LEARN.*

Testing

Schools give teacher-made and standardized tests for many reasons: to measure how your child is doing and to identify problems your child may be having, to cover classroom material, and to meet standardized and proficiency standards required by the school district or State. Ask questions that help you understand the testing program at your child's school. You should not feel uncomfortable or that it is inappropriate to ask for explanations. One way for parents to know how their children's schools are doing is to examine regular, standards-based examination results.

1. What tests will my child be given during the school year?
2. What is the difference between a test the teacher writes and a standardized test?
3. At what grade level will standardized tests be given? Is there a schedule available?
4. Will someone be available to explain the meaning of test results if I have questions?
5. Should I help my child prepare to take a test, and how would I do that?
6. If I wanted to work with my child on practice tests where could I get copies of old tests or practice test materials?
7. How important are test scores in my child's grade? Do you consider other class projects, essays, and participation, too?
8. Do you review tests and test results with the children? Will my child have a chance to understand why an answer was wrong?
9. Is it possible for me to review test results with my child at home?
10. Do you keep a folder of my child's work with test results included?
11. Does the school require proficiency or "high stakes" testing in order to move from one grade level or to graduate?

For more information on testing read "Annual Testing: Learning What Works." To order, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

Computers

Computers let students travel around the world without ever leaving their desks at school or your home. They can make learning easier and more fun, and learning how to use them will give your child many advantages in the future.

1. Find out how computers are used at your child's school.
2. How much time each day and week does your child get to use them?
3. At school, can your child use the Internet—a worldwide computer network that can provide huge amounts of information on almost any topic? Are there safeguards or filters to prevent inappropriate use?
4. Be sure your child's school gives equal computer time for girls and boys. While many women use computers, they are still outnumbered by men in computer jobs. Encourage your daughter to use the computer.
5. If you don't have a computer at home, find out if the local library or community center has computers your child can use to do homework and other school projects.
6. If your child has a learning disability, ask if the school offers special computer programs and/or supports for children who have learning disabilities or different learning styles.
7. Find out if your child's teachers have been trained to work with computers and to use them in helping students learn.
8. Ask about the kind of work that your child is doing on the computer. Does it sound challenging? Is your child excited about learning on the computer?
9. Take a computer class or learn how to use the computer to assist you child at home. Does the school, local library, or community center offer computer training for adults?

For more information, call 1-800-USA-LEARN.

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